

Hart-Miller Island increases public access

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A ribbon cutting ceremony was held Friday morning, June 10, to celebrate the grand opening of the South Cell of Hart-Miller Island. An additional 300 acres is now open to the public for biking, hiking and nature watching.

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Accessible only by boat, Hart-Miller Island has more than a half mile of beachfront open to the public.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources opened Maryland's newest state park Friday, June 10. However, it is currently only accessible by boat.

Three-hundred additional acres are now open to the public on Hart-Miller Island State Park. Opened in 1982, the island previously had about a half mile of beachfront available to the public.

The public access location is called the South Cell. The North Cell is still under construction, and still closed to the public. Visual barriers and signage are posted to keep the public away and out of danger.

"We have now opened five miles of hiking and biking trails that lead visitors through the interior of the South Cell, which will be open for the first time on long weekends Thursdays through Mondays," said Maryland Park Service Superintendent Nina Settina.

There is no need to bring your personal bike to the island by boat; bike rentals will be available on the island.

Located at the mouth of Back River, the 1,100-acre artificial Hart-Miller Island was originally two islands, Hart and Miller, which were originally part of a peninsula that extended from Edgemere.

In 1821, Joseph Hart purchased Hart and Miller islands.

The history of present day Hart-Miller Island began in 1977 and 1978, when Bethlehem Steel Corporation and C.J. Langenfelter & Son Inc. respectively, conveyed deeds to the property, then known as Hart-Miller-Pleasure Island Chain to Maryland's Department of Natural Resources.

Then, in 1981, the state of Maryland began the creation of what is now Hart-Miller Island by construction of a dike in the shape of an ellipse that included both Hart and Miller islands. The dike was created in



1984, and the resulting impoundment was filled with material that was dredged from the Baltimore Harbor, its approach channels and the channels in the upper Chesapeake Bay.

Along with the more than five miles of new hiking and biking trails, Hart-Miller Island currently features swimming, wading, sunbathing and picnicking areas, 22 rustic campsites, excellent bird and wildlife viewing opportunities, and an observation tower which offers a bird's eye view of the beachfront and Chesapeake.

The island's North Cell is still closed to the public while habitat development activities are still underway. Eventually, the entire island will be turned over to the Department of Natural Resources and public access will be expanded for passive recreation and enjoyment of the island in about five years.